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# *Information Bulletin*

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*Grade 6 English Language Arts  
1996-97*



This document was written primarily for:

Students	✓
Teachers	✓
Administrators	✓
Parents	
General Audience	
Others	✓ Superintendents

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This bulletin contains general information about the Provincial Student Assessment Program and information specific to the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. **It replaces all previous bulletins.**

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**October 1996**

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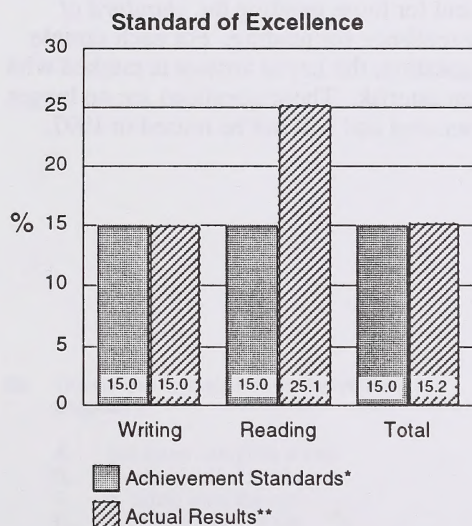
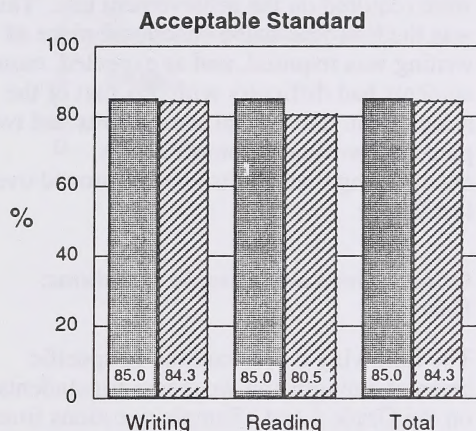


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# Looking Back: Highlights of 1996

## Grade 6 English Language Arts

This information provides teachers, school administrators, and the public with an overview of the results for the June 1996 Grade 6 English Language Arts provincial assessment. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.



\*the percentage of students in the province expected to meet the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence

\*\*the percentage of students in the province who met the standards (based on those who wrote)

### Who Wrote the Test?

All students registered in Grade 6 were expected to write the 1996 English Language Arts Achievement Test. A total of 40 475 students completed the June 1996 assessment. This number reflects an increase of approximately 1 047 students over last years' administration of the test. In 1996, only a small proportion of students in Grade 6 did not write the test: 1.3% of students were absent, 2.8% of students were excused from writing by their superintendent, and an additional 1.6% of students wrote only one part of the test.

### What Was the Test Like?

The test had two parts.

*Section I* of the *Part A: Writing* assignment consisted of a picture and a prompt that students responded to in the form of a story.

*Section II* of the *Part A: Writing* assignment required students to write a business letter.

Both pieces of the writing were scored in five reporting categories: Content, Organization, Sentence Structure, Vocabulary, and Conventions. Content and Organization were weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the other categories.

*Part B: Reading* consisted of 50 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections that were either informational or narrative/poetic in nature.



## ***How Well Did Students Do?***

As shown in the graphs on page one, in writing, slightly fewer students than expected met the *acceptable standard* but the expected number met the *standard of excellence*. In reading, not as many students as expected met the *acceptable standard*, but 10.1% more students than expected met the *standard of excellence*. For the total test, slightly fewer students than expected met the *acceptable standard* but again, the expected number met the *standard of excellence*.

In 11.1% of the schools, the percentage of students meeting the *acceptable standard* for the total test was significantly above expectations for the province. In 71.7% of the schools, the percentage of students meeting the *acceptable standard* was not significantly different from provincial expectations. In 17.3% of schools, the percentage of students meeting the *acceptable standard* was significantly below provincial expectations. Schools where fewer than five students wrote the Grade 6 test are not included in these school calculations.

For detailed provincial assessment results, refer to your school reports.

## ***Has Achievement Changed Since Last Year?***

This year, many more students than last year met the *standard of excellence* for reading.

The overall quality of the writing in 1996 is better than that done in 1995, with more students than last year meeting both the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence*.

## ***Commentary and Sample Questions from Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test 1996***

### **Observations and Results: Writing**

This was the first year that two pieces of writing, a narrative and a business letter, were required on the achievement test. This was the first year that a functional piece of writing was required, and as expected, more students had difficulty with this part of the assignment. Given that the students had two pieces of writing to complete, it is encouraging that results have improved over last year.

### **Observations and Sample Questions: Reading**

The following is a discussion of specific areas of strength and weakness for students on the Grade 6 test. Sample questions from the test are provided to highlight these areas for students meeting the *acceptable standard* and for those meeting the *standard of excellence* for reading. For each sample question, the keyed answer is marked with an asterisk. These questions are no longer secured and will not be reused in 1997.

32. The long “measuring tapes” (line 9) are

- A. skyways
  - B. runways
  - C. railways
  - \* D. roadways
- 

21. Brian can **best** be described as being

- A. cunning
  - B. intelligent
  - \* C. resourceful
  - D. imaginative
- 

50. The mouse is upside down **most likely** because it

- A. has been caught in a trap
  - \* B. has been killed by the cat
  - C. is hiding from the cat
  - D. is playing with the cat
- 

30. The “creatures” (line 3) the tourist is talking about are

- A. space vehicles
- B. huge robots
- \* C. motor vehicles
- D. glass buildings

## Acceptable Standard

For **question 32**, students had to judge the most likely meaning of a phrase from its context. Of students who met the *acceptable standard* but not the *standard of excellence*, approximately 82% were able to do this.

In **question 21**, many students meeting the *acceptable standard* but not the *standard of excellence* had difficulty making a judgement about characters by synthesizing information. Only 53% of this group were able to correctly answer this question.

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The strengths of students who met the *acceptable standard* include the ability to

- identify different genres
- understand the elements of story structure
- recognize the author’s purpose (in straightforward informational text)
- use text and typographical features to assist their reading

However, many of these students did not do as well as expected in

- inferring implicit relationships among events and ideas
- making generalizations
- drawing conclusions by synthesizing pertinent details from a reading selection
- understanding selections that were not narrative in form (particularly poetry and cartoons)

## Standard of Excellence

**Question 50** required students to draw a conclusion by synthesizing information in a concrete poem. Of students meeting the *standard of excellence*, 95.6% answered this question correctly.

**Question 30** required students to draw a conclusion about characters by synthesizing information in a poem. Of students meeting the *standard of excellence*, 92.6% answered this question correctly.



Students who met the *standard of excellence* had very few difficulties with this assessment. These students could

- synthesize information from a selection to make inferences, judgements, and draw conclusions
- recognize the meaning of words and phrases from the context of the material
- make judgements about the author's purpose
- understand the author's point of view
- understand the selections that were not in narrative form (poems and cartoons)

### **Draft and Final Copies**

This year, for the first time, students were asked to complete only one copy of their writing. It was suggested that they write on every other line to allow for changes and corrections directly on their work.

Some teachers have concerns that this practice does not respect the writing process. We agree that the complete writing process should be modelled and respected in the classroom. Although a time-limited test situation does not permit the same degree or type of prewriting and revising activities, the achievement testing procedures are designed to reflect the writing process as well. Students are allowed an opportunity to discuss the writing prompts with classmates in small groups and to plan their writing. Because time is limited, the students are encouraged to spend the majority of their time in composing and revising. We believe that allowing them to do their revising directly on their draft will benefit them, since in the past many students wasted valuable time simply recopying a draft to make it neater; most did not pay special attention to improving the content or quality of what they had originally written.

During the central marking session held in July, most teacher markers were pleasantly surprised at the overall quality and neatness of the students' work. Most agreed that not having to produce a "good copy" of the writing ensured that the majority of the students had enough time to complete the test.

The practice of requiring only one copy of the writing will continue in 1997.

### **Two Pieces of Writing**

Also for the first time this year, students were required to complete two pieces of writing. Again, some teachers expressed concerns that this was not appropriate.

The two-response format allows students to demonstrate what they know and can do better than a single sample writing test. Since research indicates that students perform differently depending on the type of writing assignment they are doing; a single writing sample may actually be an injustice to students. We believe that it is important to broaden the curriculum base from which we are testing by covering more of the formats in which students are expected to be proficient.

### **Reporting the Results**

On August 23, 1996, each school jurisdiction received, electronically, a district report and individual school reports regarding their students' achievement, as well as guidelines for interpreting these results in relation to provincial standards.

To facilitate reflection on school programs, we expect that results will be shared with all school staff (not just teachers of grades 3, 6, and 9), as well as with parents and the community.

Two copies of an individual profile for each student were sent to the school that the student will attend in September. We expect that the Parent Copy will be given to parents and the School Copy will remain with the student's record.

**All Achievement Tests administered in 1993 and prior to 1993 are no longer secured.**



# Looking Ahead: What is Upcoming for 1997

## General Information

The Provincial Student Assessment Program provides teachers, parents, students, school administrators, Alberta Education, and the public with information about what students know and can do in relation to provincial standards. Group results are reported at school, district, and provincial levels to improve learning opportunities for students.

The assessments are administered in two subject areas at Grade 3—language arts and mathematics—and in four subject areas at grades 6 and 9—language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science.

The assessments are based on provincial standards, which reflect important learnings in the subject areas listed above. Classroom teachers from across the province are extensively involved in developing and field testing the assessment instruments.

## Administering the Assessment

Information about the nature of the provincial assessments as well as their administration to special needs students can be found in the *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*, which is mailed each fall to all superintendents and principals.

## Schedule

The written-response component of English and French Language Arts will be administered during the last week of May. The machine-scorable component of all achievement tests will be administered during the last two weeks of June. Specific information regarding scheduling is provided in the current *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*.

To minimize any risks to security, we recommend that all students complete the test on the same day. Superintendents approve a local schedule for achievement

test administration within the dates provided. Students who are absent when the tests are administered and who return to school by the end of the school year must write the tests upon their return. By scheduling the tests early in the administration period most, if not all, absentees can be tested upon their return to school. The principal is responsible for ensuring the security of the tests.

The tests that will be administered each year are:

### Grade 3

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)

Mathematics (English and French forms)

### Grade 6

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)

Français 6<sup>e</sup> année (*Partie A: Production écrite and Partie B: Lecture*)

Mathematics (English and French forms)

Science (English and French forms)\* see p. 7

Social Studies (English and French forms)

### Grade 9

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)

Français 9<sup>e</sup> année (*Partie A: Production écrite and Partie B: Lecture*)

Mathematics (English and French forms)

Science (English and French forms)

Social Studies (English and French forms)

## Students in French Programs

All students in French programs must write English Language Arts, French Language Arts, and French versions of other achievement tests if their language of instruction is French. Alberta Education will send a checklist to schools in January requesting an indication of how many English or French tests are required. These forms must be returned through jurisdiction offices by mid-February.



\* Resources for the implementation of the revised Program of Studies for elementary science will not be available until the 1997–98 school year. Therefore, implementation of the revised Program of Studies for students in French programs is optional for the 1996–97 school year. Schools offering grade 6 science in French must decide which form of the science test they will write in June 1997. The choices are either the translated form of the 1996 Grade 6 Science Achievement Test based on the previous program or the 1997 Grade 6 Science Achievement Test based on the revised program. Schools offering Grade 6 Science in French must choose one form or the other for all students in Grade 6 writing in French.

### ***Marking Achievement Tests Locally***

Teachers are able to mark the tests before returning them to Alberta Education. Teachers can use the results as part of an individual student's year end assessment, as well as for planning instruction.

### ***Performance Assessments***

Performance assessments provide students with real-life tasks. These assessments address many of the learner expectations that cannot be easily measured using only paper and pencil strategies. These tasks have been developed by classroom teachers and are designed to model good classroom instruction and assessment practices.

The Student Evaluation Branch uses these tasks to collect a broader base of information about what students know and can do than achievement tests alone can provide. These assessments will be administered to a provincial sample of students in all subjects on a rotating basis. The following assessments will be given in 1997:

#### **Grade 3**

- informational book tasks in language arts

#### **Grade 6**

- social studies: inquiry into basic needs

#### **Grade 9**

- problem-solving and communication tasks in science

## ***Standards: Curriculum, Assessment, Achievement***

The move toward results-based curricula has re-emphasized the need for a clear delineation of standards and their purpose. All standards and all methods of setting standards require judgement. Local targets are also described in this section.

The process of setting a standard can only be as good as the judgements that go into it. The standard will depend on whose judgements are involved in the process. In this sense, all standards are subjective. Yet once a standard has been set, the decisions based on it can be made objectively. Instead of a separate set of judgements for each test-taker, you will have the same set of judgements applied to all test-takers. Standards cannot be objectively determined, but they can be objectively applied.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Definitions***

The Achievement Testing Program is directly concerned with three different but related standards. These provincial standards are curriculum standards, assessment standards, and achievement standards.

- **Curriculum Standards** are the expected student learnings sequenced into grade levels. They include broad statements of knowledge, skills, and attitude expectations against which student performance is judged. These standards are established in the process of curriculum development and are found in the *Program of Studies* document produced for each subject.

<sup>1</sup> Passing Scores; Samuel A. Livingston, Michael J. Zieky; Educational Testing Service, 1982.



- **Assessment Standards** are the criteria adopted for judging actual student achievement relative to curriculum standards. They are ultimately expressed and applied to test scores. They are derived from answers to questions such as: What scores must a student obtain or how many questions on a given test must a student answer correctly in order for his/her performance on the test to be judged as acceptable or excellent?
- **Achievement Standards** are judgements that specify what percentages of students are expected to achieve an acceptable and an excellent level of achievement in relation to each course of studies, i.e. to the relevant curriculum standards. It is important to point out that this judgement is not a prediction of the percentage of students who will actually achieve acceptable or excellent levels, but rather a specification of the percentage of students at a given grade or year in school who are *expected* to achieve the acceptable (85%) or excellent level (15%). **The 85% of students expected to meet the acceptable standard includes those students who meet the standard of excellence.** These standards apply to school, jurisdiction, and provincial performance.
- **Local targets** are goals set in schools/districts to focus plans for helping students learn what is expected by the provincial government. These local targets reflect the specific needs of students, the views of teachers, school administration, and the local community, and the resources available to provide learning opportunities for students.

## Confirming Standards

Confirming standards is a process whereby judgements about students' performance on the assessment are made in relation to provincial standards. For more information on the confirming standards process, refer to the *Provincial Student Assessment Program Provincial Report, June 1993 Administration*. For information on the selection of teachers for participation in the confirming standards process, refer to the

current *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*.

## Purpose of Assessment Standards

The provincial standards are the basis upon which we assess how well students have learned English Language Arts by the end of Grade 6. These standards reflect the essential learnings that all Alberta students are expected to achieve. Provincial standards are useful, therefore, for assessing Grade 6 students in all types of school programs—public, private, and home education. By comparing actual results with provincial standards, decisions can be made about whether achievement is, in fact, “good enough.”

## Description of the Language Arts Assessment Standards

The following statements describe what is expected of Grade 6 students who are meeting the *acceptable standard* or the *standard of excellence* on independent work at the end of the Grade 6 Language Arts program. These statements represent the standards against which student achievement will be measured.

### Acceptable Standard

Students meeting the *acceptable standard* in Grade 6 English Language Arts should be able to deal with a familiar idea in writing, such as the narration of a personal experience. On occasion, these students should be able to deal with complex and/or original thoughts. They are expected to produce work using clear words and expressions, and relevant, general details. They should be able to organize concrete, factual materials containing straightforward ideas. They are expected to recognize increasingly complex techniques of literary structure and organization, such as cause and effect, foreshadowing, and flashback.

It is expected that students meeting the *acceptable standard* are able to read relatively short, simple selections of fiction, non-fiction, prose, and poetry, and to correctly identify the main idea, sequence of events, key details, author's purpose, and

imagery used. These students should be somewhat able to associate meanings of specific words and expressions in context. It is expected that these students can analyze details and synthesize ideas in a familiar context. They should be able to consistently answer literal (idea, detail, and relationship) questions. Occasionally, they should be able to understand ideas, details, and relationships that are implied in a reading selection.

### ***Standard of Excellence***

Students meeting the *standard of excellence* are expected to confidently and competently deal with writing that requires complex and original thought. They should be able to develop and organize abstract, complex materials. It is expected that these students can consistently establish an appropriate focus for communication and select ideas and language to suit different purposes and audiences. Students meeting the *standard of excellence* should be able not only to recognize complex techniques of literary structure and/or organization, but also to apply them to their own writing.

It is expected that students meeting the *standard of excellence* can effectively deal with abstract and complex details and ideas found in longer, sophisticated selections of fiction, non-fiction, prose, and poetry. These students should be able to read and reflect on print and non-print text from many perspectives. It is expected that they are able to analyze and evaluate ideas received from a wide variety of materials. Students meeting the *standard of excellence* should be able to readily answer literal as well as implied idea, detail, and relationship questions.

## ***Grade 6 English Language Arts Assessment***

The Grade 6 English Language Arts Assessment is composed of two parts.

**Part A: Writing** consists of two writing assignments designed to be completed in two hours. Included in the total period is

time for discussion before the narrative writing, and planning, drafting, and revising of both the narrative and functional writing. Additional time of up to 30 minutes may be provided to allow students to finish.

**This assessment has two new prompts that are not repeated from previous years.**

**Part B: Reading** (multiple choice) is designed to be completed in 60 minutes. Additional time of up to 30 minutes may be provided to allow students to finish. It consists of 50 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, drama, poetry, and visual media. **Part B: Reading** has one booklet containing reading passages and questions. Answers are to be recorded on a separate machine-scorable answer sheet.

Students may use a dictionary and a thesaurus when completing **only Part A: Writing**.

### ***Part A: Writing***

Section I of the **Part A: Writing** assignment consists of a picture and a prompt that students will be asked to respond to in the form of a story.

Section II of the **Part A: Writing** assignment requires the students to write for a specific audience and to fulfill a specified purpose within a given context. Specified purposes may include letters of invitation to guest speakers, requests for information, and congratulatory or thank-you letters. This part of the assignment tests students' writing skills using "real world" situations. The writers' ability to adjust content, order, tone, and diction to the situation is being tested.

Section I includes a page labelled Planning. Students are asked to produce only one copy of their work. They are encouraged to write on every other line and to make revisions and corrections directly on this copy. Because of the limited time available for achievement testing, it is felt that students benefit most from spending the majority of their time in composing and revising their work, rather than perfecting a "good copy." In the past, when both draft and final copies were



required, most students would just recopy their original work, paying special attention to neatness rather than to improving the content or overall quality of what they had originally written. What we now expect is a good first draft from students.

Section II includes a page labelled Planning and two lined pages for a letter, followed by a blank envelope that is to be addressed properly.

### ***Important Information to Note!***

At the beginning of the test, students will be given time to discuss both prompts with classmates in groups of two to four, or to think alone about them, and to plan their responses before beginning to write.

In the past, many students have written papers that were “off topic.” Please encourage your students to address the prompts. Students who make no attempt to address the prompt will be awarded an Insufficient.

Students may do their writing using a word processor. For information about using word-processing technology to complete the written component of the achievement test, see the draft policy in the *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*.

The mark for writing is worth 50% of the total mark for Language Arts. Section I, narrative/essay is worth approximately 2/3 of the total writing mark and Section II, functional, is worth approximately 1/3 of the total writing mark.

## ***Blueprint for Part A: Section I—Narrative Writing***

The blueprint that follows outlines Part A: Section I of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It delineates the categories under which summary data will be reported to school jurisdictions.

<b>Reporting Category</b>	<b>Description of Writing Assignment</b>	<b>Standards</b>
<p><b>*Content</b> (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose) Events and/or actions should be plausible and appropriate to the student's purpose. The student should be able to describe characters and setting using details that are appropriate for the context established.</p>	<p>The narrative writing assignment follows a picture and a writing prompt that will be read aloud to students. The students are to respond to the prompt in the form of a story.</p>	<p>The student's achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following standard statements:</p>
<p><b>*Organization</b> (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole) The student should be able to organize the response effectively and coherently to produce a unified composition that achieves his/her purpose for writing.</p>		<p>Meets the standard of excellence</p> <p>Approaches the standard of excellence</p>
<p><b>Sentence Structure</b> (structuring sentences effectively) The student should be able to use a variety of sentence types and structures to achieve clarity, interest, and emphasis.</p>		<p>Clearly meets the acceptable standard</p> <p>Does not clearly meet the acceptable standard</p>
<p><b>Vocabulary</b> (selecting and using words and expressions correctly and effectively) The student should be able to use words and expressions appropriately and effectively to communicate to the specified audience and to achieve his/her purpose.</p>		<p>Clearly below the acceptable standard</p> <p>INS insufficient</p>
<p><b>Conventions</b> (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) The student should be able to communicate clearly by adhering to appropriate spelling, punctuation, and grammar conventions.</p>		

\*These categories are weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the others.



## ***Blueprint for Part A: Section II—Functional Writing***

The blueprint that follows outlines Part A: Section II of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It delineates the categories under which summary data will be reported to school jurisdictions.

This is a change from last year where five reporting categories were used to score the functional writing.

Reporting Category	Description of Writing Assignment	Standards
<b>Content</b> (thought and detail) The student should be able to consider the audience and be able to establish a purpose, incorporating significant information using precise and appropriate details.	The functional writing assignment requires the student to write to a specified audience in the context of a business letter. They are expected to correctly address a blank envelope as well.	The student's achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following standard statements:
<b>Content Management</b> (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) The student should be able to communicate clearly by adhering to appropriate spelling, punctuation, and grammar conventions.		Meets the standard of excellence  Approaches the standard of excellence  Clearly meets the acceptable standard  Does not clearly meet the acceptable standard  Clearly below the acceptable standard  INS insufficient

Content and Content Management are weighted equally.

## **Marking**

Classroom teachers will be able to mark students' writing, using scoring guides like those in this bulletin, before returning materials to Alberta Education. Samples of students' writing that exemplify the scoring criteria will be provided with the test materials, to support local marking.

Marks awarded locally can be submitted to Alberta Education and used as the first reading of a student's response. The papers will then be marked centrally by Alberta Education as the second reading. Both marks contribute to the student's final mark. In the case of a discrepancy between these two marks, papers will be adjudicated by a third reading, which will determine the final mark that a paper is awarded. Papers that are not marked locally by teachers are marked centrally, only once.

Papers that are not marked locally by teachers will be marked centrally only once. A small percentage of these papers will be marked a second time for inter-rater reliability.

All papers will be marked centrally in Edmonton in July. The Student Evaluation Branch will contact superintendents in the spring for their recommendations of markers. The approximately 175 Grade 6 teachers

selected will reflect proportional representation from the various regions of Alberta. To qualify for recommendation by a superintendent, a prospective marker must be currently teaching Grade 6 Language Arts, have taught it for at least two years, have a permanent Alberta teaching certificate, and be employed by a school jurisdiction at the time of marking. Markers will be contacted in May and the list of markers will be finalized no later than June 15. Group leaders will meet for one day prior to the marking session.

The time allotted for marking is condensed, hence markers are often asked to mark on Saturday and Sunday. The marking floor is open from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., and markers are expected to be available to mark during those hours.

## ***Practice Writing Assignments***

The practice assignments that follow are similar in format and content to the assignments on the 1997 Grade 6 English Language Arts *Part A: Writing* component. They appeared on the 1996 Achievement Test. They are no longer secured and may be used for practice with your students. Adequate space for planning and writing both sections will be provided in the writing booklet.



**Grade 6 Achievement Test**  
**English Language Arts**  
**Part A: Writing**

***To the Teacher:***

Read this page and pages 14 and 21 to your students.

***Description***

- This test consists of **two** sections.
- Before you write, you will have 10 minutes in total for discussion about the prompts in Section I and Section II.
- In **Section I**, on page 14, there is a writing prompt and a picture for you to write about.
- We suggest that you take about 70 minutes to complete Section I.
- When you have finished Section I, go on to Section II.
- **Section II**, on page 21, describes a situation that you must respond to in letter format.
- We suggest that you take approximately 40 minutes to write the letter.

**You have 2 hours to complete this test.**  
**You may take up to 30 additional minutes to complete the test, if you need it.**

***Instructions***

- Before beginning to write, you will have 10 minutes to talk with your classmates (in groups of two to four) about the writing assignments, or to think about them alone.
- Jot down your ideas and/or make a plan before you write. Do this on the ***Ideas/Planning*** page.
- You may use pencil, or blue or black ink to do your writing.
- Write on the lined pages provided. If you write on every other line, it will be easier to make changes to your work.
- You are to do only one copy of your writing. Remember that you may make changes and corrections directly on this writing.
- You may use the following references:
  - a print or electronic dictionary (English language and/or translation)
  - a thesaurus
- Your narrative writing will be evaluated on ***what*** you say and ***how well*** you say it (on **Content, Organization, Sentence Structure, Vocabulary, and Conventions**).
- Your functional writing will be evaluated on ***what*** you say and ***how well*** you say it (on **Content and Content Management**).

## ***Practice Writing Assignment—Narrative Writing***

Read the information below and complete the assignment that follows.

### **The Situation**

On page 15, you will see a picture and a sentence that may help you to imagine something. This sentence does not have to be used in your story.

### **Assignment**

Use your imagination to write a story that the picture has helped you think about.

When writing your story, **be sure to**

- **consider** your audience
- **focus** on your purpose
- **organize** your thoughts appropriately in sentences and paragraphs
- **budget** your time
- **proofread** and correct your work directly on your writing



*It all began when someone left the window open.*



Content

*Focus*

When marking **CONTENT** appropriate for Grade 6 narrative writing, the marker should consider how effectively the writer

- establishes a context
- uses events and/or actions that are appropriate for the established context
- uses specific details (of characters, setting, actions, events, etc.)
- demonstrates an awareness of audience

<p>Meets the Standard of Excellence</p> <p><b>5</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The context is clearly established and sustained.</li> <li>• The events and/or actions are consistently appropriate for the context established by the writer.</li> <li>• Supporting details are specific and consistently effective.</li> <li>• The writing captivates and holds the reader's interest and is creative and/or original.</li> </ul>
<p>Approaches the Standard of Excellence</p> <p><b>4</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The context is clearly established and generally sustained.</li> <li>• The events and/or actions are appropriate for the context established by the writer.</li> <li>• Supporting details are specific and generally effective.</li> <li>• The writing engages and generally holds the reader's interest.</li> </ul>
<p>Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard</p> <p><b>3</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The context is established but may not be sustained.</li> <li>• The majority of the events and/or actions are appropriate for the context established by the writer.</li> <li>• Supporting details are appropriate, general, and may be predictable.</li> <li>• The writing generally holds the reader's interest.</li> </ul>
<p>Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard</p> <p><b>2</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The context is vaguely established and may not be sustained.</li> <li>• Some of the events and/or actions are appropriate for the context established by the writer.</li> <li>• Supporting details are few and/or may be repetitive.</li> <li>• The writing does not hold the reader's interest.</li> </ul>
<p>Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard</p> <p><b>1</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The context may be unclear and/or not sustained.</li> <li>• There are few events and/or actions.</li> <li>• Supporting details are scant.</li> <li>• The writing is confusing and/or frustrating for the reader.</li> </ul>
<p>INS INSUFFICIENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student has written so little that it is not possible to assess the content.</li> </ul>

*Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.*



## Organization

### *Focus*

When marking **ORGANIZATION** appropriate for Grade 6 narrative writing, the marker should consider how effectively the writer

- introduces the topic/subject
- follows a coherent order
- establishes connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters
- brings closure to the writing

<p>Meets the Standard of Excellence</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>5</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The introduction is purposeful, interesting, and clearly establishes events, characters, and/or setting, and provides direction for the writing.</li> <li>• Events and/or details are arranged in paragraphs in a purposeful and effective order, and coherence is maintained.</li> <li>• Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are consistently maintained.</li> <li>• The ending ties events and/or actions together.</li> </ul>
<p>Approaches the Standard of Excellence</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>4</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The introduction clearly establishes events, characters, and/or setting, and provides direction for the writing.</li> <li>• Events and/or details are arranged in paragraphs, in a purposeful order, and coherence is generally maintained.</li> <li>• Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are maintained.</li> <li>• The ending provides an appropriate finish for events and/or actions.</li> </ul>
<p>Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>3</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The introduction directly presents information about events, characters, and/or setting.</li> <li>• Events and/or details are arranged in a discernible order, although coherence may falter occasionally.</li> <li>• Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are generally maintained.</li> <li>• The ending is predictable and/or contrived, but is connected to events and/or actions.</li> </ul>
<p>Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>2</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The introduction provides little information.</li> <li>• The arrangement of events and/or details is not clearly discernible, and coherence falters frequently.</li> <li>• Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are unclear and/or inconsistent or missing.</li> <li>• The ending is predictable and/or contrived, and may not be connected to events and/or actions.</li> </ul>
<p>Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The introduction may be confusing.</li> <li>• The arrangement of events and/or details is haphazard and incoherent.</li> <li>• Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are missing.</li> <li>• The ending, if present, is unconnected to the events and/or actions.</li> </ul>
<p>INS    INSUFFICIENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing has been awarded an INS for <b>Content</b>.</li> </ul>

*Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.*

## Sentence Structure

### *Focus*

When marking **SENTENCE STRUCTURE** appropriate for Grade 6 narrative writing, the marker should consider the

- writer's control of sentence structure
- effectiveness and variety of sentence type and length
- variety of sentence beginnings

<b>Meets the Standard of Excellence</b>  <b>5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentence structure is effectively and consistently controlled.</li> <li>• Sentence type and length are consistently effective and varied.</li> <li>• Sentence beginnings are varied.</li> </ul>
<b>Approaches the Standard of Excellence</b>  <b>4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentence structure is controlled.</li> <li>• Sentence type and length are usually effective and varied.</li> <li>• Sentence beginnings are often varied.</li> </ul>
<b>Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard</b>  <b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentence structure is generally controlled, but may occasionally impede the meaning.</li> <li>• Sentence type and length are sometimes effective and/or varied.</li> <li>• Some variety of sentence beginnings is evident.</li> </ul>
<b>Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard</b>  <b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentence structure sometimes lacks control, and this can impede the meaning.</li> <li>• There is little variation of sentence type and length.</li> <li>• There is little variety of sentence beginnings.</li> </ul>
<b>Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard</b>  <b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentence structure generally lacks control, and this severely impedes the meaning.</li> <li>• There is no variation of sentence type or length.</li> <li>• There is no variety of sentence beginnings.</li> </ul>
<b>INS    INSUFFICIENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing has been awarded an INS for <b>Content</b>.</li> </ul>



## Vocabulary

### *Focus*

When marking **VOCABULARY** appropriate for Grade 6 narrative writing, the marker should consider the extent to which the writer uses

- words and phrases accurately and effectively
- specific words and expressions

<b>Meets the Standard of Excellence</b>  <b>5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Words and expressions are used accurately and effectively.</li> <li>• Specific words and expressions are used to create vivid images and/or to enrich details.</li> </ul>
<b>Approaches the Standard of Excellence</b>  <b>4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Words and expressions are used accurately and often effectively.</li> <li>• Specific words and expressions are frequently used to create images and/or to add clarity to details.</li> </ul>
<b>Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard</b>  <b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Words and expressions are used appropriately.</li> <li>• General words and expressions are sometimes used where specific words and expressions would have been more effective.</li> </ul>
<b>Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard</b>  <b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Words and expressions are generally used appropriately.</li> <li>• General, rather than specific, words and expressions predominate.</li> </ul>
<b>Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard</b>  <b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Words and expressions are sometimes appropriately.</li> <li>• General words and expressions that convey only vague meanings are used.</li> </ul>
<b>INS    INSUFFICIENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing has been awarded an INS for <b>Content</b>.</li> </ul>

## Conventions

### *Focus*

When marking **CONVENTIONS** appropriate for Grade 6 narrative writing, the marker should consider the extent to which the writer has control of

- mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, indenting for new speakers, etc.) and grammar (agreement of subject–verb, pronoun antecedent, pronoun reference)
- clarity and flow of the communication

**Proportion of error to length and complexity of response must be considered.**

Meets the Standard of Excellence  <b>5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of the writing is <b>enhanced</b> because it is essentially error free.</li> <li>• Errors, if present, do not reduce the clarity or interrupt the flow of the communication.</li> </ul>
Approaches the Standard of Excellence  <b>4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of the writing is <b>sustained</b> because it contains only minor convention errors.</li> <li>• Errors that are present do not reduce the clarity or interrupt the flow of the communication.</li> </ul>
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard  <b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of the writing is <b>maintained</b> through generally correct use of conventions.</li> <li>• Errors that are present rarely reduce the clarity or interrupt the flow of the communication.</li> </ul>
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard  <b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of the writing is <b>weakened</b> by the frequently incorrect use of conventions.</li> <li>• Errors often reduce the clarity and interrupt the flow of the communication.</li> </ul>
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard  <b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of the writing is <b>limited</b> by the consistently incorrect use of conventions.</li> <li>• Errors severely reduce the clarity and interrupt the flow of the communication.</li> </ul>
<b>INS    INSUFFICIENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing has been awarded an INS for <b>Content</b>.</li> </ul>



## ***Practice Writing Assignment—Functional Writing***

Read the information below and complete the assignment that follows.

### **The Situation**

Pretend that you are a member of your school's Environment Club. This club is preparing special activities to be held during Environment Week. One of the planned activities is a series of presentations to the school.

Each club member is responsible for a presentation on some particular environmental topic. As a club member, you will need to locate information on the topic that you are interested in.

### **Assignment**

Write a letter to Pat Smith, the director of the agency listed below, requesting the specific information that you will need to do your presentation.

Among other details, **be sure to**

- **describe** the topic you have chosen
- **include** the purpose of your research
- **include** why you are interested in this topic, concern, or issue
- **request** that the information be sent to Kelly Brown's address
- **sign** your letter Kelly Brown: **do not use your own name**

NOTE: Remember to follow a letter format. Address the envelope outline on page 23.

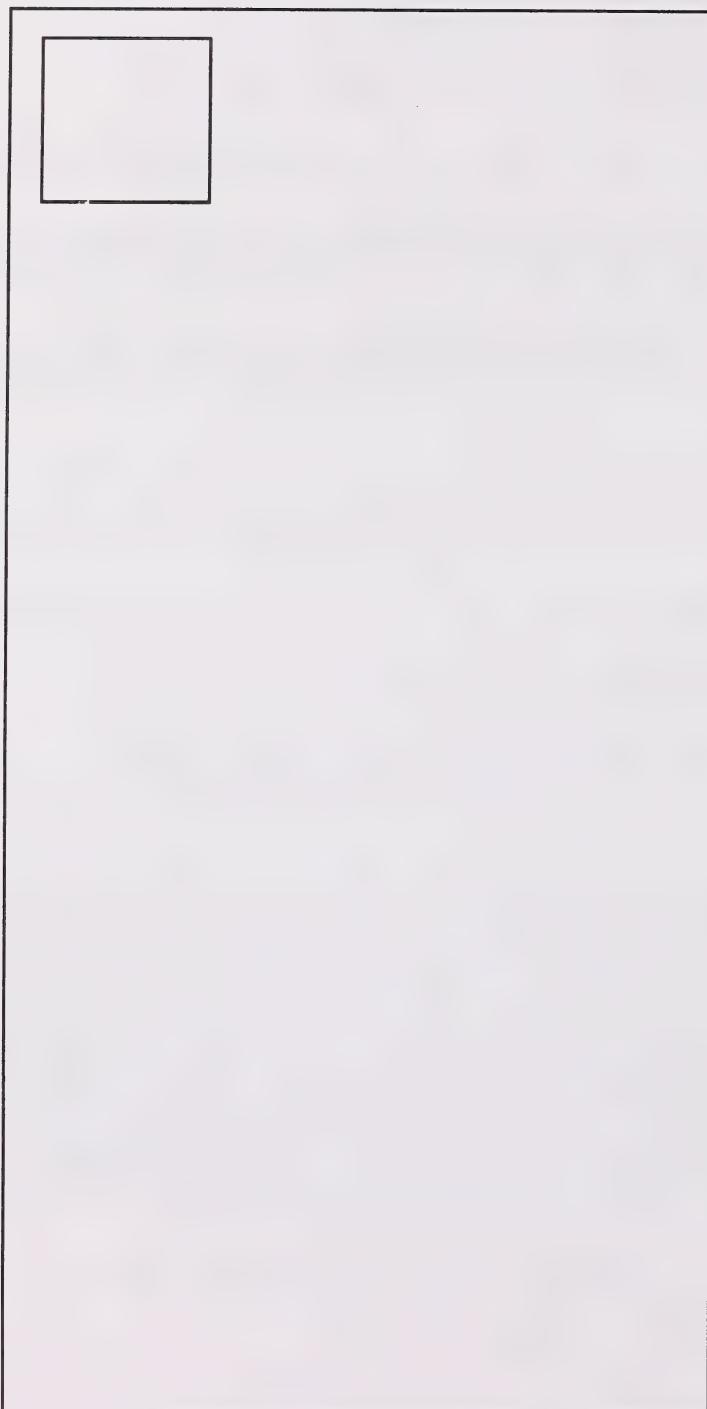
#### **Agency**

Pat Smith, Director, Friends of Environmental Education Society of Alberta (FEESA)  
#320, 9939 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 2X5

#### **Kelly Brown's Address**

3692 Grange Road, Cromwell, Alberta T9P 0N0

ENVELOPE





Content

*Focus*

When marking **CONTENT** appropriate for Grade 6 functional writing, the marker should consider

- the effectiveness of development
- how the purpose is fulfilled with complete and appropriate information
- appropriateness of tone (awareness of audience)

<p>Meets the Standard of Excellence</p> <p><b>5</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of topic or function is clearly focused and effective.</li> <li>• Complete information is presented, and this information is enhanced by precise and appropriate details that effectively fulfill the purpose.</li> <li>• A tone appropriate for the addressee is clearly and effectively maintained.</li> </ul>
<p>Approaches the Standard of Excellence</p> <p><b>4</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of topic or function is generally focused and effective.</li> <li>• Complete information is presented, and this information is substantiated by appropriate details that fulfill the purpose.</li> <li>• A tone appropriate for the addressee is clearly maintained.</li> </ul>
<p>Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard</p> <p><b>3</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of topic or function is adequate.</li> <li>• Sufficient information is given, and this information is supported by enough detail to fulfill the purpose.</li> <li>• A tone appropriate for the addressee is generally maintained.</li> </ul>
<p>Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard</p> <p><b>2</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of topic or function is vaguely focused and ineffective.</li> <li>• Essential information may be missing. Supporting details are scant, insignificant, and/or irrelevant. The purpose is only partially fulfilled.</li> <li>• A tone appropriate for the addressee is evident but not maintained.</li> </ul>
<p>Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard</p> <p><b>1</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of topic or function, if present, is inadequate.</li> <li>• Essential information and supporting details are inappropriate or lacking. The purpose is not fulfilled.</li> <li>• Little awareness of tone appropriate for the addressee is evident.</li> </ul>
<p><b>INS INSUFFICIENT</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The marker can discern no evidence of an attempt to fulfill the assignment, or the writing is so deficient in length that it is not possible to assess content.</li> </ul>

*Note: Content and Content Management are equally weighted.*

Please advise students that they must attempt to address the assignment. Those letters that are completely “off topic” will be awarded an Insufficient.

## Content Management

### *Focus*

When marking **CONTENT MANAGEMENT** appropriate for Grade 6 functional writing, the marker should consider

- accuracy and effectiveness of words/phrases and expressions (as appropriate for a business letter)
- control of sentence structures, usage, grammar, and mechanics
- consistent application of format for business letter/envelope

**Proportion of error to length and complexity of response must be considered.**

<p><b>Meets the Standard of Excellence</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>5</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The selection and use of words/phrases and expressions are consistently accurate and effective.</li> <li>• The writing demonstrates confident and consistent control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.</li> <li>• The letter/envelope are essentially free from format errors and/or omissions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Approaches the Standard of Excellence</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>4</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The selection and use of words/phrases and expressions are usually accurate and effective.</li> <li>• The writing demonstrates competent and generally consistent control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.</li> <li>• The letter/envelope contain few format errors and/or omissions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>3</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The selection and use of words/phrases and expressions are generally accurate and appropriate.</li> <li>• The writing demonstrates basic control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. Errors may occasionally impede meaning.</li> <li>• The letter/envelope contain occasional format errors and/or omissions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>2</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The selection and use of words/phrases and expressions are frequently inappropriate and/or ineffective.</li> <li>• The writing demonstrates faltering control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. Errors impede meaning.</li> <li>• The letter/envelope contain frequent format errors and/or omissions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The selection and use of words/phrases and expressions are misused and/or ineffective.</li> <li>• The writing demonstrates lack of control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. Errors severely impede meaning.</li> <li>• The letter/envelope contain numerous and glaring format errors and/or omissions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>INS INSUFFICIENT</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing has been awarded an INS for <b>Content</b>.</li> </ul>



## ***Part B: Reading***

*Part B: Reading* of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test requires students to read selections that include a variety of informational and narrative/poetic texts with implicit ideas and details. The content of these selections is sometimes abstract and may be specialized. After reading these selections, students answer 50 multiple-choice questions based on the readings.

The sample selections and questions on pages 28 to 34 appeared on the June 1996 Achievement Test (all other questions on this test are secured). These released questions, along with questions from previous bulletins, can be used to prepare students for the current Achievement Test.

These questions illustrate the nature and complexity of those that will appear on the 1997 test, although the emphasis will be different. The blueprint for Part B of the achievement test, showing the approximate number of questions in each reporting category, appears on the next page.

## ***Development***

Reading selections are chosen according to the following general guidelines:

- Reading selections, whenever possible, should be relatively short but should be complete works containing a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Reading selections should reflect the interests of the majority of Grade 6 students.
- Reading selections should be of appropriate difficulty for Grade 6 students.
- Canadian content should be used extensively.

The following considerations guided question development:

- Questions relating to each reading selection are arranged from specific to general, wherever practical.
- Questions should test the student's ability to understand and analyze the reading selections and to make judgements about their form and content. Only questions dealing with significant aspects of the reading selections should be asked.

## Reading Blueprint

The blueprint for *Part B: Reading* shows the reporting categories and language function under which questions are classified. The number of questions in each category is approximate.

### Part B: Reading Grade 6 Language Arts Achievement Test, June 1997

Reporting Category	Question Distribution by Language Function		Number of Questions	Percent of Test
	Informational	Narrative/Poetic		
<b>Main Ideas/Details</b> The student should be able to recognize explicit and inferred or implicit relationships among settings, events, characters, and ideas, and identify growth or change in fictional characters.	6	7	13	26
<b>Organization of Ideas and Relationships between Form and Content</b> The student should be able to identify genre and elements of story structure, recognize the author's techniques, determine the author's purpose, and use text and typographical features to assist reading.	2	6	8	16
<b>Associating Meaning</b> The student should be able to associate meanings of words and expressions from prior knowledge and contextual clues, understand the denotations and connotations of words and expressions, and determine the meaning and effect of the more common types of figurative language.	6	7	13	26
<b>Synthesizing Ideas</b> The student should be able to draw conclusions, make generalizations, and/or predict plausible outcomes by synthesizing information from the entire reading selection.	4	12	16	32
<b>Total Number of Questions</b>	18	32	50	100
<b>Percent of Test</b>	36	64	100	100



## Practice Reading Questions

### I. Read the story below and answer questions 1 to 6.

#### from HATCHET

*Brian is on his way to visit his father when his airplane crashes in a remote wooded area. He is the only survivor. He is able to construct a makeshift camp.*

So there were things to do.

With the camp squared away he brought in more wood. He had decided to always have enough on hand for three days. After spending one night with the fire for a friend, he knew what a staggering amount of wood it would take. He worked all through the morning at the  
5 wood, breaking down dead limbs and breaking or chopping them in smaller pieces, storing them neatly beneath the overhang. He stopped once to take a drink at the lake and in his reflection he saw that the swelling on his head was nearly gone. There was no pain there so he assumed that had taken care of itself. His leg was also back to normal, although he had a small pattern of holes—roughly star-shaped—where the quills had nailed him, and while he  
10 was standing at the lake shore taking stock he noticed that his body was changing.

He had never been fat, but he had been slightly heavy with a little extra weight just above his belt at the sides.

This was completely gone and his stomach had caved in to the hunger and the sun had cooked him past burning so he was tanning, and with the smoke from the fire his face was  
15 starting to look like leather. But perhaps more than his body was the change in his mind, or in the way he was—was becoming.

I am not the same, he thought. I see, I hear differently. He did not know when the change started, but it was there; when a sound came to him now he didn't just hear it but would know the sound. He would swing and look at it—a breaking twig, a movement of  
20 air—and know the sound as if he somehow could move his mind back down the wave of sound to the source.

He could know what the sound was before he quite realized he had heard it. And when he saw something—a bird moving a wing inside a bush or a ripple on the water—he would truly see that thing, not just notice it as he used to notice things in the city. He would see all  
25 parts of it; see the whole wing, the feathers, see the color of the feathers, see the bush, and the size and shape and color of its leaves. He would see the way the light moved with the ripples on the water and see that the wind made the ripples and which way that wind had to blow to make the ripples move in that certain way.

None of that used to be in Brian and now it was a part of him, a changed part of him, a grown part of him, and the two things, his mind and his body, had come together as well, had made a connection with each other that he didn't quite understand. When his ears heard a sound or his eyes saw a sight his mind took control of his body. Without his thinking, he moved to face the sound or sight, moved to make ready for it, to deal with it.

There were these things to do.

35 When the wood was done he decided to get a signal fire ready. He moved to the top of the rock ridge that comprised the bluff over his shelter and was pleased to find a large, flat stone area.

More wood, he thought, moaning inwardly. He went back to the fallen trees and found more dead limbs, carrying them up on the rock until he had enough for a bonfire. Initially he  
40 had thought of making a signal fire everyday but he couldn't—he would never be able to keep the wood supply going. So while he was working he decided to have the fire ready and if he heard an engine, or even thought he heard an engine, he would run up with a burning limb and set off the signal fire.

Things to do.

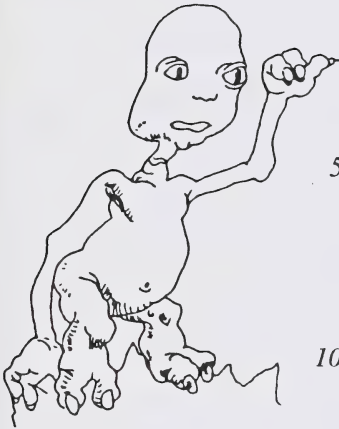
Gary Paulsen

1. The phrase “fire for a friend” (line 3) suggests that Brian
  - A. had built a signal fire
  - B. was protected by the fire
  - C. was comforted by the fire
  - D. had built a fire for other survivors
  
2. The “small pattern of holes” in Brian’s leg (line 9) was **most likely** caused when he
  - A. fell on some nails
  - B. came upon a porcupine
  - C. scratched it on dead tree limbs
  - D. was hurt in the plane crash
  
3. Brian thinks that he is “not the same” (lines 17–21) **mainly** because he
  - A. has lost weight
  - B. hears and sees better
  - C. has skin that looks like leather
  - D. is more aware of his surroundings
  
4. Brian’s shelter is
  - A. under a rock ridge
  - B. under a fallen tree
  - C. on a large, flat stone
  - D. in the remains of the plane
  
5. Brian can **best** be described as being
  - A. cunning
  - B. intelligent
  - C. resourceful
  - D. imaginative
  
6. The phrase “things to do” is repeated throughout the story to indicate that Brian is
  - A. bored with his routine
  - B. frustrated by his situation
  - C. trying to forget his surroundings
  - D. trying to keep his body and mind active



II. Read the poem below and answer questions 7 to 12.

SOUTHBOUND ON THE FREEWAY



A tourist came in from Orbitville,  
parked in the air, and said:

The creatures of this star  
are made of metal and glass.

5 Through the transparent parts  
you can see their guts.

Their feet are round and roll  
on diagrams or long

10 measuring tapes, dark  
with white lines.

They have four eyes.  
The two in back are red.

Sometimes you can see a five-eyed  
one, with a red eye turning

15 on the top of his head.  
He must be special—

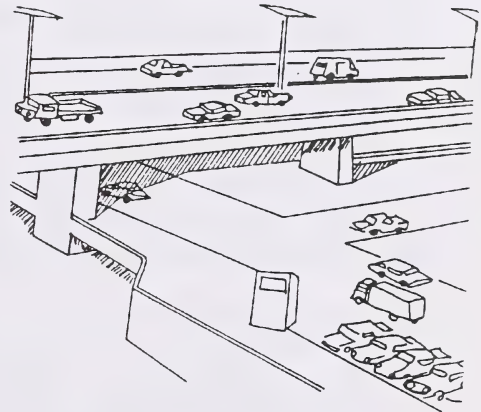
the others respect him  
and go slow

20 when he passes, winding  
among them from behind.

They all hiss as they glide,  
like inches, down the marked

tapes. Those soft shapes,  
shadowy inside

25 the hard bodies—are they  
their guts or their brains?



*May Swenson*

7. The tourist (line 1) was **most likely** travelling in a
- A. hovercraft
  - B. airplane
  - C. spaceship
  - D. helicopter
8. The “creatures” (line 3) the tourist is talking about are
- A. space vehicles
  - B. huge robots
  - C. motor vehicles
  - D. glass buildings
9. What does the “star” (line 3) refer to?
- A. Sun
  - B. Earth
  - C. Moon
  - D. Galaxy
10. The long “measuring tapes” (line 9) are
- A. skyways
  - B. runways
  - C. railways
  - D. roadways
11. The “five-eyed one” (lines 13–14) **most likely** is a
- A. police car
  - B. tow truck
  - C. sanding truck
  - D. delivery van
12. The “soft shapes” referred to in line 23 are
- A. seats
  - B. pillows
  - C. humans
  - D. astronauts



### III. Read the article below and answer questions 13 to 17.

#### MONEY MATTERS

Have you ever gone shopping with a bag of zebra tails? A belt of skulls? Long ago, in Africa and Borneo, that's what they used for money.

Strange? Not really. Before people learned how to work precious metals like gold and silver—and even today, in parts of the world where these metals are unknown—they had to  
5 find some article that was scarce and precious enough to exchange for a piece of cloth, or an axe, or a cow. They tried to find tokens that were easy to carry, but they didn't always succeed. Types of money have ranged all the way from feathers, used in New Hebrides, to massive stones the size of bicycle wheels, used in the South Pacific.

Stones the size of bicycle wheels? You couldn't carry those about in your pockets! But  
10 then, the natives of Yap, an island north of New Guinea, didn't really expect to. The village tycoon set these large stones in rings around his palm-thatched hut so that everyone on the island could tell how rich he was by measuring and counting them!

What an easy way to get money! Collecting stones! But these stones became valuable because of the very difficulty of getting them. Only calcite rocks from the distant Paulus  
15 Islands were used as money. In order to reach these islands, a perilous journey over the unpredictable Pacific Ocean was made in dugout canoes. After the stones had been quarried, they were transported back on two canoes lashed together.

Yap stone money is the heaviest money ever used. But most people want something a little easier to carry. It's even nicer if it can do double duty. In China, tea was compressed  
20 into bricks weighing two or three pounds. If the owner didn't need to buy anything, he could cut off a chunk of money and brew a pot of tea. In Mexico, cacao beans could be used either to buy a goat or to make chocolate. Cowrie shells, shiny molluscs used as money in South Sea islands, were not only small and easily handled, but could be used to make needles, fishhooks, and blades.

Shells were also used as money by North American Indians. When the tiny shells had been polished and strung on thread made from the sinews of animals, they were made into  
25 belts of *wampum* and used for trading. Forest Indians in eastern Canada used the pelts of beaver and fox as money. In bad seasons, when there was little to trade, the money became warm blankets!

Fisherman in Newfoundland, where real money was often scarce, used bundles of dried  
30 codfish to buy flour, matches, and tobacco at the local store. Not so long ago, the pioneers who cleared the bush and built the farms and cities we live in today used barrels of ashes to buy the salt and sugar and molasses they couldn't make on their backwoods farms.

Once people learned how to work metals, they started to make decorative money.  
35 Gold, because it does not rust or decay, was their favourite metal. It is also very beautiful, so early coins were always pierced so the owner could wear his wealth as a necklace or a belt. In ancient Israel and Persia, a bride often wore her dowry (the money her family gave her when she married) sewn to her headdress, so that everyone in the village could see how wealthy she was.

Well, you can't eat *your* money, or make tools or clothes from it, but it will buy you a  
40 cool drink on a hot day, and you can let your friends know you have some by rattling it in your pocket.

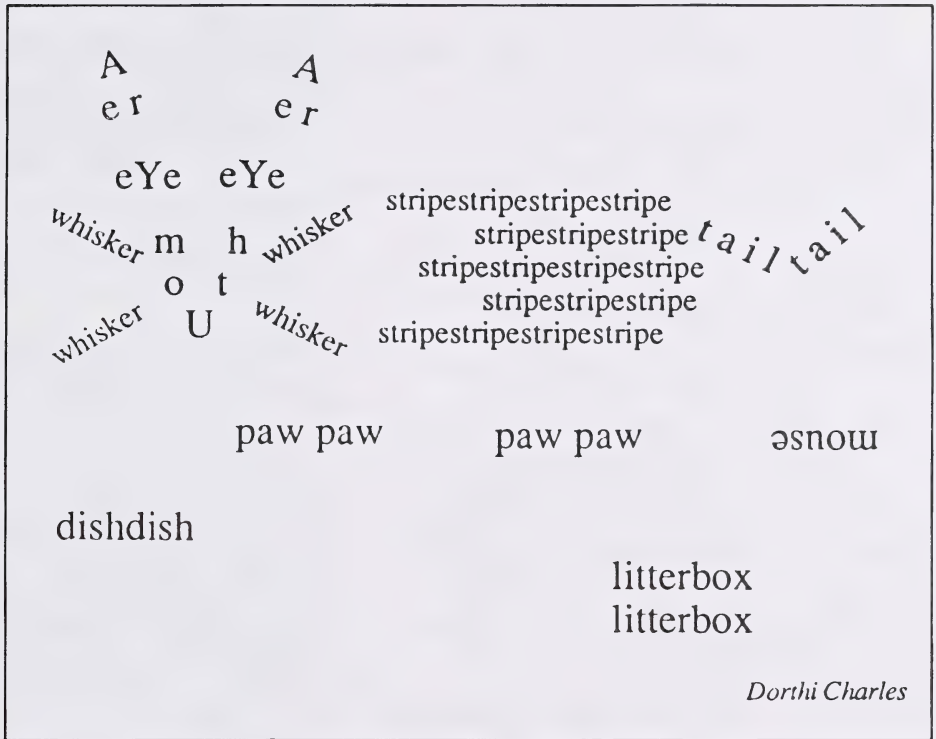
*Barbara Greenwood*

13. The **best** meaning for “tokens” in line 6 is
- A. precious metals
  - B. money
  - C. stones
  - D. valuable shells
14. The description in lines 7 and 8 suggests that money
- A. has had many and various forms
  - B. is as light as a feather
  - C. is no longer used in New Hebrides
  - D. has had the form of bicycle wheels
15. Calcite rocks became such valuable stones because they
- A. were very difficult to get
  - B. had to be quarried
  - C. were unusually large
  - D. had to be given to the chief
16. Money that did “double duty” (line 19) could be
- A. worked into beautiful coins
  - B. used for wampum
  - C. carried very easily
  - D. used for more than one purpose
17. Decorative money was made when
- A. calcite rocks were used
  - B. some articles became scarce
  - C. people learned how to work metals
  - D. wampum was used for trading



**IV. Consider the poem below and answer questions 18 and 19.**

## CONCRETE CAT



## *Key and Descriptors for Practice Reading Questions*

Question	Key	Language Function	Reporting Category	Curriculum Standard
1	C	Narrative/poetic	Synthesizing	Make a judgement by synthesizing information
2	B	Narrative/poetic	Organization of ideas	Understand an implied cause/effect relationship
3	D	Narrative/poetic	Synthesizing	Make a judgement about character motivation by synthesizing information
4	A	Narrative/poetic	Main ideas/details	Locate key details to infer physical location
5	C	Narrative/poetic	Synthesizing	Make a judgement about characters by synthesizing information
6	D	Narrative/poetic	Organization of ideas	Understand the author's purpose in repeating a word
7	C	Narrative/poetic	Synthesizing	Draw a conclusion using prior knowledge by synthesizing information
8	C	Narrative/poetic	Synthesizing	Draw a conclusion about character motivation by synthesizing information
9	B	Narrative/poetic	Associating meaning	Judge the most likely meaning of a word from its context
10	D	Narrative/poetic	Associating meaning	Judge the most likely meaning of a word from its context
11	A	Narrative/poetic	Synthesizing	Draw a conclusion using prior knowledge and by synthesizing information
12	C	Narrative/poetic	Synthesizing	Draw a conclusion using prior knowledge and by synthesizing information
13	B	Informational	Associating meaning	Judge the most likely meaning of a word from its context
14	A	Informational	Synthesizing	Draw a conclusion by synthesizing information
15	A	Informational	Synthesizing	Draw a conclusion by synthesizing information
16	D	Informational	Associating meaning	Infer the meaning of a phrase from its context
17	C	Informational	Main ideas/details	Locate key details in a passage
18	D	Narrative/poetic	Organization of ideas	Understand the poet's use of capital letters
19	B	Narrative/poetic	Synthesizing	Draw a conclusion by synthesizing information



## ***Preparing Students for the Assessment***

The best way to prepare students for the achievement tests is to teach the curriculum well and to ensure that children know what is expected. Many of the skills and attitudes that support test writing are in fact good skills and strategies for approaching all kinds of learning tasks.

Teachers are also encouraged to share the following information with their students to help them prepare for the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

Have students do the practice questions included in this bulletin. Then, have students share strategies they used to answer the questions.

In 1989 and 1993, the Student Evaluation Branch published documents entitled *Samples of Students' Writing*. These samples came from the student responses given on the 1988 and 1992 Language Arts Achievement Tests. Share these samples and the accompanying commentaries with students.

Also, familiarize students with the scoring guides in this bulletin. With instruction, students may be able to use these guides effectively when evaluating their own writing or that of peers.

### ***Part A: Writing***

Have students:

*Plan their available time carefully.* We suggest that they use all the time available to them to carefully *read* the assignment and *think* about what they are being asked to do, to *plan* their writing so that it is focused, unified, and coherent, and to *proofread* their writing. They will have two hours to complete the assignments.

*Read all the instructions carefully and do what the assignments ask them to do.* The time they spend in reading and thinking about the assignments is time well spent. Many students find that highlighting or underlining key words in the assignments helps them to focus on what is expected.

*Plan their writing using the pages provided.* They should choose a planning strategy that helps them to focus their ideas. They may want to try

- webbing
- using a chart
- listing (main ideas, character, etc.)
- using a plot outline (diagram)
- using a RAFTS model (role, audience, focus, topic, strong verb)

*Use their reference materials.* They are allowed the use of a dictionary and a thesaurus when writing Part A. Students should use a dictionary to look up the meanings of words that they want to use but are not completely sure about and to ensure that they spell words correctly. A thesaurus can be useful if they need to find a more precise word for the context they are developing, but students should be careful not to overuse a thesaurus.

*Keep in mind the characteristics of effective writing.*

- Awareness of audience (appropriateness of tone and use of correct language)
- Completeness of information (enough detail to fulfill purpose)
- Relevance of information (all details pertain to the purpose)
- Clarity of information (all details are specific and easily understood by the reader)

*Proofread their work and correct errors directly on their first draft.* Students should double-space, if they think it will allow them to make corrections more easily.

## ***Part B: Reading***

Have students:

*Read the material using the strategy that works best for them. They should either*

- read the selection and think carefully about it before they try any of the multiple-choice questions associated with the reading selection OR
- read the questions first and then read the selection, keeping in mind the questions they will need to answer

Each set of multiple-choice questions is designed to take them back through the reading selection in a certain way. The questions are ordered according to the location of the answers in the passage. For example, the answer to the first question will likely appear near the beginning of the passage, and so on. Questions relating to the reading selection as a whole will appear at the end of the set of questions.

*Consider all forms of information provided.*

Information will be presented not only in words but also in visual forms such as cartoons, pictures, or charts.

*Take the time to reread the lines that are referred to in a question.* Many questions

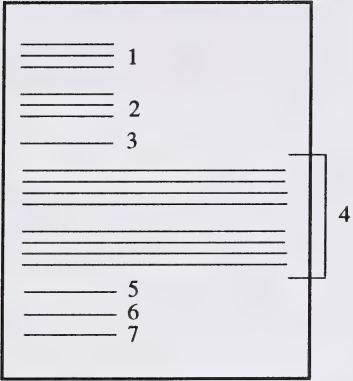
contain quotations from the selection with line references indicated. It is always worthwhile to reread the lines that are referenced and consider the meanings of these lines in both their immediate context in the selection and the context of the selection as a whole.

*Read carefully all four alternatives (A, B, C, and D) before choosing the answer that they think is best.* Some of the questions are designed to test their ability to make a judgement. These questions will often include a bold-faced qualifier in their stems, such as **best**, **most strongly**, or **most clearly**. All of the alternatives (A, B, C, and D) are, to some degree, correct, but one of the alternatives will be “best” in that it takes more of the reading selection into account or can be supported most strongly by reference to the reading selection.

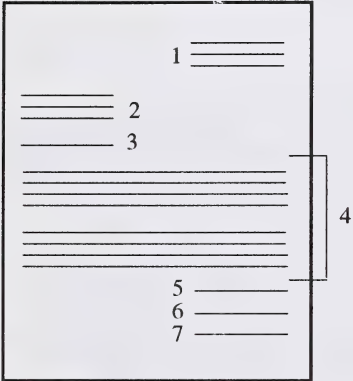
*Work from partial knowledge when it is appropriate to do so.* If a correct or best answer does not become obvious to them fairly quickly, they may want to eliminate the answers that seem least appropriate and then use their judgement to select an answer from those that remain.



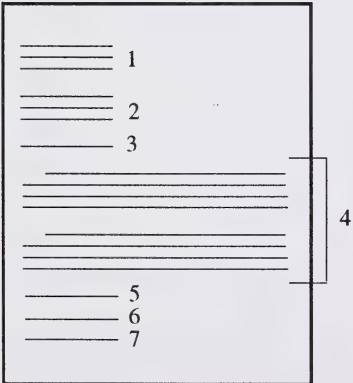
# Three Business Letter Formats



**The block format.** In this format all parts of the letter run along the left side of the page (margin). No paragraphs in the body are indented, but an extra space is left between paragraphs.



**The modified block format.** In this format the heading and the closing and signature run along the right margin. All the other parts run along the left margin.



**The semiblock format.** This format is the same as the block format, except that the paragraphs in the body are indented.

# Format of a Business Letter

There are three basic business letter formats. Any of these formats is appropriate and acceptable for the test. What is most important is that students choose one format and use it consistently.

**Parts of the Business Letter** (see previous page)

## 1. Heading

The heading consists of your address and the date.

501 Spring Street  
Regina SK R3T 4N7  
January 3, 1997

## 2. Inside Address

The inside address consists of the name and address of the person to whom you are writing. It usually appears four lines below the heading if a word processor is used, or one line below if it is hand-written.

Sam Hunt, Director  
The Knitting Mill  
1409 3 Avenue  
Toronto ON L3V 7O1

## 3. Salutation

The most traditional salutation or greeting for a business letter is *Dear* followed by Mr., Ms., Mrs., or Miss and the person's last name, and ending with a colon.

Dear Mr. Smith:  
Dear Ms. Black:  
Dear Mrs. Brown:  
Dear Miss Green:

## 4. Body

The body is the main part of the letter in which you write what you have to say to the person. Skip one line after the salutation.

- Get to the point. However, ensure that sufficient information is given so that your purpose is clearly understood.
- Business letters are usually formal, so the language that you use should also be formal.

## 5. Closing

The closing is the ending to your letter. It appears at the bottom of the letter, directly under the body. Only the first word in the closing should be capitalized. It is always followed by a comma.

Yours truly,  
Sincerely,

## 6. Signature

The signature is your full name signed. Your signature should appear directly below the closing. It should always be written in ink.

## 7. Your name printed

## 8. Commonly Used Abbreviations for Provinces and Territories

Province	Symbol
Alberta	AB
British Columbia	BC
Manitoba	MB
New Brunswick	NB
Newfoundland	NF
Northwest Territories	NT
Nova Scotia	NS
Ontario	ON
Prince Edward Island	PE
Quebec	QC or PQ
Saskatchewan	SK
Yukon	YT

## Addressing an Envelope

The diagram shows a rectangular envelope. In the top left corner, there are three horizontal lines for the return address, preceded by a circled number 1. In the center of the envelope, there are four horizontal lines for the mailing address, preceded by a circled number 2.

### 1. Return Address

The return address is the name and address of the person sending the letter. The return address appears in the top left corner of the envelope and consists of your name, street address, city or town, province, and postal code.

JEAN BROWN  
13 SPRING RD  
TORONTO ON L2R 3V6

### 2. Mailing Address

The mailing address is the name and address to which the letter is being sent. It always appears in the centre of the envelope. In a business letter, the address on the envelope is the same as the inside address of the letter. There may be separate lines for the title of the addressee (Editor, Director, President), the division or department the person works in, and the name of his or her company, business, or organization.

SAM HUNT  
DIRECTOR  
THE KNITTING MILL  
1403 3 AVE  
TORONTO ON L3V 7O1

The following points are taken from the *Canadian Addressing Standards* document:

1. Addresses should be typed or written in upper case or block letters.
2. All lines of the address must be formatted with a uniform left margin.
3. Punctuation marks (commas, periods, etc.) should not be used unless they are part of a place name (e.g., ST. JOHN'S).
4. The postal code should always appear on the same line as the municipality and province name and be separated from the province by two spaces.
5. The two-letter symbol for the province name should be used wherever possible (see previous page).
6. The return address should be formatted in the same way as the main address.



## *Credits*

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